

Natural England Wild Take Licensing Policy Review: Workshop Summary Reports

Workshop 1: Thursday 23rd March 2023

Workshop 2: Thursday 6th July 2023

March 2025

Natural England Commissioned Report NECR519

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Foreword

Natural England is undertaking a comprehensive review of its approach to licensing 'wild take' – the taking of birds of prey from the wild for use in falconry or aviculture – to inform the development of a new policy covering this aspect of its licencing remit, and to set out a future approach to wild take licensing. To assist in this research and evidence gathering Natural England commissioned Dialogue Matters to design, develop, facilitate and provide reports of discussions from multi stakeholder workshops with organisations who were interested in or potentially impacted by future licensing decisions for wild take.

Natural England commission a range of reports from external contractors to provide evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England.

While these workshop reports are published under Natural England's format and style in this document, it should be understood that they were produced neutrally by Dialogue Matters – a third party that designs stakeholder dialogue processes.

Executive Summary

All wild birds are protected. Licenses may be granted, however, for birds of prey (BoP) to be taken from the wild for the purposes of falconry and aviculture if a set of licensing 'tests' are met. These tests include that there are no satisfactory alternative solutions or net negative conservation impacts to the species. Since the 1980s the sector has relied on captive-bred birds. In recent years, and as wild populations of some bird of prey species have recovered, there has been applications to Natural England (NE) for wild take licenses. Supported by DEFRA, NE are reviewing the evidence and engaging with stakeholders to develop robust, evidence-based, and transparent future approaches to licensing this activity. As part of this process, NE wanted to discuss the situation with stakeholders in a dialogue spanning two workshops.

Representatives from all organisations that responded to NE's public call for evidence were invited to attend the workshops. DM and NE then worked together to ensure, as much as possible, that there was a fair balance of voices from different relevant interests and knowledge-types (e.g. falconry, aviculture, conservation, animal welfare) that were available to attend.

The first workshop was on the 23rd of March, when a group of 28 people from conservation, animal welfare, falconry, aviculture, statutory, legal and citizen interests joined an interactive online workshop hosted on Zoom. Together they set out a vision for what success in terms of licensing wild take might look like, shared knowledge and information, and discussed what would constitute effective policy.

After the first workshop, participants had the chance to share the report with their interest group and gather wider comments and perspectives that could inform discussion in a second workshop.

On Thursday 6th July, 21 people met online via Zoom to take part in a second interactive workshop. NE presented an update on progress in the policy review process, and shared new information and the conclusions they had drawn from all evidence gathered so far. They then shared a broad outline of the two draft policy options developed from that evidence for both falconry and aviculture. Workshop participants discussed the pros and cons of the draft policy options, indicated their level of support for each, and shared what would need to happen for them to increase their support.

Both workshops were designed, led, and reported by Dialogue Matters (DM). To create a good ratio of facilitators to participants, DM trained volunteers from NE to help facilitate break out group conversations. Facilitators captured the essence of points made by participants in response to questions. At certain points in the dialogue participants also anonymously typed their own comments or ideas directly into the online facilitation tool or completed a survey.

This report presents a summary overview of both events in the dialogue process. It is based on the two workshop summary reports and workshop record reports that were

shared with all participants after the event. The latter reports contain all the points made by participants during the workshops.

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Workshop 1 Summary

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Introduction

All wild birds are protected. Licenses can be granted, however, for birds of prey (BoP) to be taken for the purposes of falconry and aviculture if a set of licensing tests are met. These tests include that there are no satisfactory alternatives or net negative conservation impacts to the species. Since the 1980s the sector has relied on captive-bred birds. In recent years, and as wild populations of some bird of prey species have recovered, there has been applications to Natural England (NE) for wild take licenses. Supported by DEFRA, NE are reviewing the evidence and engaging with stakeholders to develop robust, evidence-based, and transparent future approaches to licensing this activity. As part of this process, NE wanted to discuss the situation with stakeholders in a dialogue spanning two workshops.

The first workshop was on the 23rd of March, when a group of 28 people from conservation, animal welfare, falconry, aviculture, statutory, legal and citizen interests joined an interactive online workshop hosted on Zoom. Together they set out a vision for what success in terms of licensing wild take might look like, shared knowledge and information, and discussed what would constitute effective policy. Representatives from all organisations that had responded to NE’s public call for evidence were invited to attend.

The workshop was designed, led, and reported by Dialogue Matters (DM). To create a good ratio of facilitators to participants, DM trained volunteers from NE to help facilitate break out group conversations. Facilitators captured the essence of points made by participants in response to questions.

This summary provides an overview of the event. It is based on the workshop record that was shared with all participants after the event and which contains all the points made by participants during the workshop.

Sense of Direction

Participants began by contributing their ideas to a positive future for falcons and falconry by responding to the following question:

Imagine it is 2035 and you are at an event talking about how much better things are for falcons and falconry as a result of work started in 2023. The two things that please you most are...

The responses demonstrated how nuanced the discussions are around falcons, falconry, and the practice of wild take. A future where all populations of raptors (wild and captive) were healthy and thriving emerged as a prominent idea. Many shared the aspiration that there would be no need for wild take, with raptors better protected and persecution and illegal take much reduced. It was also articulated that conservationists, falconers, and breeders would be working together in raptor conservation and education efforts, with some arguing that this should include the use of wild take (e.g. for the purposes of breeding rare species with a restricted gene pool), and that a high standard of falconry practice continued. Further aspirations included more effective, integrated, and better monitored legislation around BoP and for dialogue and discussions between stakeholders to play an important role in decision-making.

Knowledge and information sharing

After the futures exercise, participants explored trends and changes they knew were relevant to falcons and falconry, discussed constraints for change, and explored uncertainties and information needs. They also shared their knowledge of the current situation and information sources that NE may not have accessed.

Trends and changes

There is uncertainty around the prevalence and scale of illegal wild take and illegal trade. Some participants felt that there is a lack of awareness around the scale or seriousness of illegal trade in falcons in the UK and Ireland and others that there is little evidence of illegal wild take beyond talk of it. It was noted that it is difficult to monitor illegal activity relating to this issue and that relaxed registration controls have not helped the situation as the market has expanded. It was suggested that with increasing public awareness of animal welfare and sentience, the taking, or licensing the taking, of falcons from the wild would require a high level of ethical justification. It was also reported that there is an increasing trend of wild-disabled peregrines being used successfully for captive breeding. While birds bred from wild-disabled birds cannot be used commercially, concerns were raised about there being nothing to stop descendants from the F2 generation and beyond being used commercially. Other trends and changes identified by participants included knowledge regarding the genetic similarity of European and British falconry stock.

Constraints for change

Public perceptions of wild take, insufficient funds for policing, and conflicts with current legislation were all listed as prominent constraints for change. Other constraints discussed included: the banning of tethering; overproduction of captive birds; lack of regulation on who can keep birds of prey; impacts on biodiversity; public awareness of animal sentience; and illegal take and trade.

Uncertainties and information needs

Participants think it is vital to know how NE interprets various relevant legislation – including the Habitat's Directive, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA), and the EU Birds Directive – and how they define what are and are not satisfactory alternatives to wild take. It was also felt that NE should make clear what has changed between 1980 and today that is influencing their decision-making process. Among other information considered vital to know was the scale of illegal take and trade, and what the benefits would be of having one wild bird among hundreds of captive stock. Several participants suggested creating formalised records of information – for example to draw on for decision-making and for mitigating hybridisation in breeding. The full list of uncertainties and information needs was set out in the workshop record report shared with all participants after the event. Other information and data sources

Participants also shared what they considered to be important contemporary knowledge around falcons and falconry from their unique perspective, and information and data sources that NE may not have been aware of or have accessed. These were listed in full in the workshop record report.

Exploring different ideas for wild take

In the next stage of the workshop, participants discussed the varied benefits and drawbacks of different ideas for, or alternative suitable solutions to, wild take. They then suggested measures to reduce any potential negative impacts of each idea and the questions and information needs that would be raised by each.

NE reviews applications for wild take on a case-by-case basis, with applicants making the case for why there are no suitable alternatives

Suggested pros: Some falconers can potentially experience wild take if they meet certain criteria; the right people get licenses if it is done well; people need to meet certain criteria to get a license; people have the opportunity to make a case for wild take; one participant also suggested that it potentially provides solutions to human-raptor conflicts where there is a problem bird, if landowners and falconers can be connected via the licensing scheme.

Suggested cons: Risk of increasing laundering of wild birds if policed improperly; resource heavy to assess, to apply, and to police; potentially financially inequitable; relevant legislation is sometimes conflicting and managed by several authorities; the case-by-case approach has already led to conflict.

Potential measures to reduce negative impacts: There were several different perspectives shared about the number of licenses that should be made available, with suggestions including that license numbers should be determined by wild population numbers, that there should be no limit on license numbers, and that the number of licenses should be determined by the number of applicants. A cluster of ideas also

suggested that any licensing should be strictly managed to prevent wild birds being used commercially and that any licensing should be compatible with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Microchipping birds and using the UK's two licensed ring manufacturers were put forward as ways to monitor birds taken from the wild and any associated illegal activity.

Questions and information needs:

- How are the alternative suitable solutions determined?
- How do you determine population density? Need a reliable survey methodology to give accurate figures.
- Who determines the number of licenses?
- What are the criteria to determine who is a falconer?
- Are there sufficient resources to monitor and enforce?
- Do we go back to potentially destructive practices because we enjoy them?

Use of captive bred birds as an alternative to wild take

Suggested pros: Large, self-sustaining captive populations already exist; limits pressure on wild BoP populations; easier to acquire birds for falconers; supports responsible breeders; avoids negative reputational impacts for falconry arising from public opposition; reduced need for monitoring and policing of falconry activities; known bird pedigree and parentage; there has been a reasonable input of wild genetics into UK captive populations; falconers can still experience being out in the field by contributing to nest monitoring.

Suggested cons: Loss of the cultural experience of wild take for some falconers; disconnecting falconers from nature; falconers less able to contribute to conservation and rehabilitation; potential inbreeding of small captive populations in some BoP species.

Potential measures to reduce negative impacts: The tightening of licensing and documentation of birds was put forward as an idea to prevent inbreeding in captive populations. Using genetically diverse, captive-bred birds from Europe was also suggested as a means of resolving any inbreeding in UK captive populations. Domestic-bred birds costing less than wild taken birds was also suggested by one participant as a way to reduce negative impacts.

Questions and information needs:

- Need better understanding of captive stocks and their health, and market forces (e.g., demand from Gulf states and ebbs and flows in demand within the UK)
- Should recommendations be made to DEFRA for changes to the WCA?
- Will there be a distinction between falconers and commercial breeders?

Use of registered wild-disabled birds (non-releasable) as an alternative to wild take – i.e., for captive breeding

Suggested pros: No need to take healthy birds from the wild; could satisfy cultural experience of wild take in tracking and rescuing a disabled bird; disabled birds could be monitored easily with microchipping to police their use; gives value to disabled birds as potential breeders; licensed disabled wild birds have been bred from successfully; injured but flyable passage birds could be enjoyed non-contentiously; it recognises sustainable cultural use under the Birds Directive.

Suggested cons: Does not satisfy the full cultural and practical aspects of falconry (flying and hunting); no reliable source of disabled birds; most rehabbers don't want these birds; it is more difficult to breed from wild hawks; risk of incentivising people to disable birds intentionally to breed from them; the effort of setting up a studbook; onerous to police correctly; any wild animal shouldn't be subjected to captivity by humans.

Potential measures to reduce negative impacts: Group-working with all interested parties could help move conversations forward. Issuing limited licenses based on population densities, the manufacture and coordination of studbooks (on the back of DNA testing) to profile all peregrines, and putting a life ring on every usable bird were all suggested as measures to reduce the negative impacts of using registered and non-releasable wild-disabled birds. There were contrasting views on breeding: that offspring of wild taken disabled birds should be made available for sale to give the animal value, and in contrast, that breeding should not happen unless there was demonstrable conservation benefit.

Questions and information needs:

- What extent will existing legislation (e.g., WCA, Birds Directive) be changed after Brexit?
- If a bird is non-releasable, is it good enough stock to breed from?
- Will the birds have a good quality of life - who decides whether it's appropriate to breed or put down (e.g. a vet)?
- Should registration be stricter? E.g., ringing birds to limit their commercial value.
- Is there data for how many non-releasable injured birds there are annually?

Use of registered injured wild birds (rehabilitation and release) as an alternative to wild take – i.e., for flying/hunting prior to release

Suggested pros: Removes the need to take healthy birds from the wild; better survival prospects for injured birds in captivity; we would not need to euthanize injured birds; incentivizes rehabilitation; grounded fledglings could become part of breeding programs; rehabilitated raptors can be useful in breeding projects.

Suggested cons: Some consider that these birds aren't useful for flying or breeding; concerns that you could be breeding from a poor gene pool; potential for people

fraudulently registering injured birds as disabled; it does not satisfy the cultural heritage aspects of wild take; captive birds are a better alternative to wild take; it would be a poor experience for both falconers and birds.

Potential measures to reduce negative impacts: One participant felt that distinguishing between birds taken for flying and birds taken for breeding was an important first step. It was suggested that RSPCA policies should guide whether a bird should be euthanised or rehabilitated. These guidelines were subsequently questioned on the basis that the RSPCA were not experts on BoP. Other ideas included building proof of disablement into assessment processes and preventing the use of rehabilitated birds for breeding to stop them being disguised as disabled. Screening to make sure people had the appropriate skills to rehabilitate birds was another measure put forward, and the possibility of banking biological samples for genetic testing to reduce the risk of illegality.

Questions and information needs:

- Are rehab birds good for breeding, and would it be legal to move birds from a rehab centre to a breeding facility?
- Would breeding from rehab birds increase genetic diversity in captive stocks?
- What number of birds would be available in a year?
- At what point is legal acquisition made?

Characteristics of effective policy

Lastly, participants discussed what of existing policy works and is worth learning from (e.g. from the current situation and also other areas of policy not associated with wild take). They also suggested what would characterise an effective policy for the potential licensing of wild take in the future.

The protection of wild bird populations was important to participants. With some raptor populations of interest to falconers recovering, participants felt that the existing approach was working well with regards to protecting BoP. Questions were raised, however, about how much protective legislation and how much the publicity and awareness generated by public hawking displays were each contributing to positive population trends for wild raptors. Another perceived positive of the existing situation was that more is being done to confront illegal activity – with DEFRA increasing their funding of the National Wildlife Crime Unit cited as an example. There was also feeling that whatever policy emerges, it needs robust policing.

Consistent communication and genuine engagement around policy is important for people. NE engagement with stakeholders in upland management emerged as an example of an existing policy working well, while breakdowns in communication between the Hawk Board and stakeholders was cited as something to learn from. Bigger hawking clubs using formalised codes of conduct to vet suitable falconers was also suggested as something that is working well and worth applying in a policy context. There was a sense that future

policy should embrace a holistic ethos, with suggestions that cultural, ecosystem, and climate aspects should all be considered and that NE, NatureScot, and Natural Resources Wales could join up approaches.

In terms of characterising effective policy, there was feeling among participants that licensing should be adaptive to future change and uncertainty (e.g. changing bird population numbers), and be subject to review. Consistency across government departments and devolved administrations was felt to be important. Participants also suggested that transparency, clarity on license application criteria, and links with all relevant legislation were characteristics of effective policy. It was suggested that any policy should be evidence-based, and that learning could be taken from other countries that license wild take (such as Ireland and Germany) while complying to the same legal obligations as the UK. People also felt that learning could be drawn from licensing policy for other activities – such as nest monitoring, bird ringing, and deer stalking. The need for license applicants to demonstrate competency was among other suggestions for what would characterise effective policy, with existing regimes in the US and France cited as current examples of good practice. Effective monitoring/policing was also mentioned, with the relevant authorities given sufficient funding and resources to ensure compliance.

Summary and Next Steps

The purpose of this workshop was to: share knowledge and information from different perspectives relevant to the potential licensing of the wild take of birds for use in falconry and aviculture; discuss what effective policy might look like; and generate ideas on what any future policy could include.

NE will use the outputs from the workshop discussions over the next few months – along with information generated in the call for evidence, interview, and literature review stages of the licensing review process – all to inform the drafting of new licensing policy recommendations. A second workshop is scheduled on Thursday 6th July 2023 to inform the final stages of policy development and to see where there is agreement about the best potential courses of action.

We are grateful and thank those who took part in the online workshop and gave their time to share their knowledge and perspectives.

Workshop 2 Summary

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Introduction

All wild birds are protected. Licenses can be granted, however, for birds of prey (BoP) to be taken for the purposes of falconry and aviculture if a set of licensing tests are met. These tests include that there are no satisfactory alternatives or net negative conservation impacts to the species. Since the 1980s the sector has relied on captive-bred birds. In recent years, and as wild populations of some bird of prey species have recovered there has been applications to Natural England (NE) for wild take licenses. Supported by DEFRA, NE are reviewing the evidence and engaging with stakeholders to develop robust, evidence-based, and transparent future approaches to licensing this activity.

On Thursday 6th July, 21 people from conservation, animal welfare, falconry, aviculture, statutory, legal and citizen interests met online via Zoom to take part in a second interactive workshop. All those who had attended the first workshop were invited to attend the second workshop. NE presented an update on progress in the policy review process, and shared new information and the conclusions they had drawn from all evidence gathered so far. They then shared a broad outline of the two draft policy options developed from that evidence for both falconry and aviculture. Workshop participants discussed the pros and cons of the draft policy options, indicated their level of support for each, and shared what would need to happen for them to increase their support.

After the workshop, an optional discussion session was held to consider how different interests and organisations could continue to work together on important topics which had been raised throughout the dialogue but were beyond the scope of the policy review process.

The workshop was designed, led, and reported on by Dialogue Matters (DM). To create a good ratio of facilitators to participants, DM trained volunteers from NE to help neutrally facilitate break out group discussions. Facilitators captured the essence of points made by participants in response to questions, with participants also recording their own points at certain points and responding to a survey to indicate levels of support. This summary provides an overview of the event. It is based on the workshop record report that was shared with all participants after the event and which contains all the points made by participants during the workshop.

Draft Policy Options

In the opening portion of the workshop, NE shared a broad outline of the draft policy options developed based on information gathered from the first workshop and the call for evidence, interview, and literature review stages of the licensing policy review process. The two policy options were outlined as follows:

Draft Policy Option A: NE to recommence the assessment of applications on a case-by-case basis with revised assessment criteria, license conditions, and compliance arrangements.

Overview Policy Option A:

- Each application assessed on its own merits.
- Onus on applicant to provide clear evidence of 'genuine need' and why use of captive-bred birds is not an 'other satisfactory solution'.
- Consistent assessment of whether applicant has sufficient skills and experience in caring for birds of prey.
- Power to grant licences remains on statute and policy can be subject to future review if there is a major change in circumstances.
- If there is ever a need to undertake captive-breeding and release for the purposes of conserving a native bird of prey species in the wild, applications would fall under separate licensing purpose.

Draft Policy Option B: NE to suspend licensing of wild take (subject to an exceptional circumstances clause) until further notice.

Overview Policy Option B:

- Licences will not be granted unless there is an exceptional reason for doing so. Examples might include:
 - A major disease outbreak that wipes out a substantial proportion of the captive-breeding stock of one or more species of interest.
 - New evidence to suggest that a genetic bottleneck exists in captive-breeding population(s) of one or more species.
- Power to grant licences remains on statute and policy can be subject to future review if there is a major change in circumstances.
- If there is ever a need to undertake captive-breeding and release for the purposes of conserving a native bird of prey species in the wild, applications would fall under separate licensing purpose.

Participants were then given the opportunity to ask questions of clarification.

Exploring the Pros and Cons of Draft Policy Option A for Falconry and Aviculture

Pros suggested by participants:

- Assessing each case on merit is the fairest way
- Improve welfare outcomes for birds taken, dependent on assessment criteria and conditions
- Could encourage a more robust regulatory system
- Helps to keep falconers' cultural heritage alive
- Falconer skills/experience and BoP population status both taken into consideration in licence application assessments
- Ensures licensed individuals would have necessary skills and facilities
- Applicants would be under the scrutiny of both regulators and falconers
- Applicants responsible for providing evidence
- Gives people a viable option for wild take

Cons suggested by participants:

- Similar to status quo, which has caused frustration for applicants – could falsely raise expectations as will be difficult to demonstrate no *“other satisfactory solution”* (applications fall at the first hurdle)
- Significant concerns about birds being used for commercial breeding and laundering via legal trade/inconsistent with current approach to CITES
- Concerns over the cost, consistency, and viability of effectively monitoring and policing
- Impacts on, and conflicts with, other licensing regimes (notably commercial use under CITES)
- Uncertain assessment criteria
- Captive-bred and wild-disabled birds already offer a satisfactory alternative
- Potential risks to those assessing the competencies of falconers

Participant suggestions for what needs to be solved to implement:

- Transparent assessment criteria, especially with regard to animal welfare
- Building trust and communication networks between falconers, conservationists, and regulators
- Developing a legal framework that ensures applicants are suitably qualified
- Clear assessment process, clear criteria and conditions
- Setting the bar for welfare, knowledge, and standards of practice
- Consistent approach to welfare of wild and captive birds
- Clear approach to assessing whether there are satisfactory alternatives
- Handling negative public perceptions of, and reactions to, licensed wild take

- Preventing non-licenced commercial use of birds and their offspring by closing policy loopholes
- Ongoing compliance monitoring

Exploring the Pros and Cons of Draft Policy Option B for Falconry and Aviculture

Pros suggested by participants:

- Clear to understand and gives legislative clarity
- Complements the current approach to CITES
- Positive reputational benefits for both falconers and NE
- Will be kept under review; does not burden NE staff with assessments
- Wouldn't inadvertently fuel commercial trade
- Protects varying wild BoP populations
- No need to take birds from the wild on top of captive surplus
- One participant felt it is the right thing to do

Cons suggested by participants*:

- Stopping legal wild take could push the practice underground, increasing illegality
- Uncertainty how current policy loopholes could be addressed
- Licensing small numbers of people to take wild birds is unlikely to impact wild populations
- Intangible cultural heritage for falconry not taken into consideration
- Potential for legal challenge if shown to be inconsistent with approach to other cultural practices (e.g., gull egg-collecting)
- Cannot guarantee if captive-bred birds will always be available

Participant suggestions for what needs to be solved to implement:

- Clearly defining what would constitute exceptional or catastrophic circumstances
- Timeframes for policy review
- A clear explanation to show how this policy decision was arrived at and what the rationale was
- Coordinated studbook system for captive populations to improve genetic management
- Clearly defining what evidence would be needed to change the policy
- Explanation of legal position if wild birds are thriving and no impact on populations
- A process for reinstating licensing if a need is justified

*In this portion of the workshop discussion participants also debated the prevalence of bird laundering and illegal activity, and questions around the possibility of using wild taken birds and their progeny for commercial breeding.

Levels of Support

Policy Option A for Falconry

There was roughly an even split among participants between those broadly supporting and those with concerns about Policy Option A for Falconry.

Justifications for placing their level of support where they did for participants who were supportive of this option included that aspects of falconry heritage and culture would be maintained, that wild take would remain a possibility for those interested in it, and that a case-by-case approach seems fair and sensible. For those who registered concerns, reasons cited for doing so included the potential for exacerbating illegal activity, the resources required to process, monitor, and police applications, and that there was no need for wild take because of sufficient captive breeding.

Among circumstances, actions or measures cited that might help increase people's levels of support were:

- Clarity on the assessment criteria
- Reinstatement of registration controls
- Robust welfare measures for birds
- An exception if there was insufficient captive breeding
- Evidence to support cultural need for it
- And a strict supervisory system and improved response to illegal activity

Policy Option A for Aviculture

Multiple participants had concerns about Policy Option A for Aviculture. A small number supported it.

When asked why they had put their level of support where they did, one participant stated that if wild take was acceptable for falconry, it should be for other purposes too. Several participants felt that there are suitable alternatives to wild take for aviculture – chiefly captive breeding, such that they did not support this option at all. Another person was concerned about the negative public reaction to any wild take licensing and implications for the reputation of falconers. Concern was also expressed about the insufficient focus on the welfare of taken birds in this policy option.

To increase their level of support, several participants felt there would need to be strong and objective evidence of the need for licensing wild take on a case-by-case basis for aviculture. Other responses included that there would need to be an agreed monitoring

and registration system and that the welfare of birds would need to be shown as a significant consideration. Another felt that the details of the assessment criteria would need to be clarified first. A significant proportion of participants either did not respond or stated that nothing could increase their level of support for this policy option.

Policy Option B for Falconry

There was a roughly even split between those with concerns/strong concerns and those who supported/strongly supported this option.

Among participants registering concerns, reasons cited included that there was no need to change the current approach (with one participant citing the low number of applications) and that this option would take away historic cultural aspects of falconry practice. Others thought that licences should be issued on the basis that conservation status would not be affected. For those registering support of Policy Option B for falconry, justifications included belief that the evidence supports this course of action, that falconry can persist without wild take, and that restrictions on taking birds from the wild were to be welcomed. One participant qualified that their support was contingent on the recognition that the use of wild-disabled birds presented a satisfactory alternative to wild take.

When asked what could increase their support, several participants either stated that they already fully supported this option or that nothing could increase their support. Seven participants also did not respond to this question. One participant stated that their level of support could increase if there was an exceptional conservation need only. Another participant would want to see examples of evidence that would need to be supplied to support an 'exceptional circumstances' case.

Policy Option B for Aviculture

Most participants supported/strongly supported this option, and most others felt that they could live with it.

There was feeling among several participants that the evidence supported the suspension of wild take licensing for aviculture. It was also felt that there is no need to breed from wild stock currently. One person said that they welcomed any restrictions on taking BoP from the wild while another stated that suspending licensing would likely be proven a mistake in the future. One participant, meanwhile, questioned why there had not been information presented on the level of demand for licenses.

Circumstances or measures that would increase people's support were similar to responses registered for Policy Option B for falconry. Examples of evidence that would be needed to support an 'exceptional circumstances' case was cited again and the need for evidence of genuine need. One participant stated that falconry retaining access to wild birds was the only way they could support a policy, while another participant felt that a studbook and registration system were necessary for falconry and aviculture more broadly.

Two people felt unable to comment in an avicultural context, while eight people did not respond at all.

Summary and Next Steps

We are grateful and thank those who took part in the online workshop and gave their time to share their knowledge and perspectives and respond constructively to NE's draft policy options.

The purpose of this workshop was to gather perspectives and responses to the draft policy options for the licensing of wild take developed by NE – on the back of evidence gathered in the first workshop, call for evidence, literature review, and interview stages of the licensing policy review process – and gauge levels of support for each policy option for both falconry and aviculture.

The outputs from this workshop will be used by NE, along with the other evidence, to further refine any draft policy options before making a recommendation to DEFRA. All evidence reports will be published alongside DEFRA's policy decision – including a copy of the summary advice and policy recommendation provided to DEFRA by NE.

Glossary

Acronyms used in this report	Meaning
BoP	Bird/s of prey
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DM	Dialogue Matters
F1	First filial generation
F2	Second filial generation
NE	Natural England
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
WCA	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

